

THE DIPLOMATIC BACKGROUND OF
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strengthening of the Turkish army was not at all to its taste. Early in 1914 a violent press feud in Germany and Russia inflamed the growing hostility. *On se croit qwigwfois dans une maison de fous*, lamented Sazonoff, the Foreign Minister. In the west Anglo-German relations were easier, but frontier incidents emphasized the undying feud between Paris and Berlin. The armaments race had been accelerated after the Agadir crisis, the increase of the German army being followed by the restoration of three years' service in France. Except for a few soldiers no one in Europe wanted war, yet the Continent was like a powder magazine which a lighted match would explode.

The murder of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife at Serajevo, the capital of Bosnia, on June 28, 1914, was generally felt to be a turning point in history. The murderer, a young Austrian Serb, had been aided and encouraged by Servian officers. The Pasitch Government, though it had no part in the plot, got wind of it, yet failed to warn Vienna. The death of the heir to the throne, unpopular though he was, called for some striking retribution, and the world held its breath while the Dual Empire was considering its course. The first task was to make sure of the full support of Berlin, and after receiving an unconditional promise the Ballplatz went straight ahead. An elaborate ultimatum to Servia was presented on July 23*. On the expiration of the forty-eight hour limit on July 25, when its unconditional acceptance was declined, the Austrian Minister left Belgrad. Three days later Austria declared war on Servia.

Berchtold and his colleagues knew what they were doing, but they believed they had no choice. The ultimatum was obviously a gamble, for the localization of the conflict, though naturally desired, was hardly expected. If it failed, the realm

of the Hapsburgs would break up and
disappear. There was
no facile optimism at Vienna. ~The old
Emperor observed
that they would be fortunate if they got off with
a bkck eye ;
even Conrad, the fiery Chief of the Staff, admitted
that the most
favourable opportunities of fighting a
defensive war were
past. Why then was Austrk so intransigent ? "
The Serajevo
crime," replies Berchtold, "was simply one of
the latest
examples of the work of destruction organized
against us, of
the sapping and mining which was to blow up
the house in
which we dwelt. The Monarchy was faced by an
alternative ;
a free hand for the housebreaker or a demand
for security.
On the rejection of the ktter a fight for life
was all that